

## Contributions

### REVISED THE CREED

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An event of more than ordinary interest in the religious world transpired when the report of the Presbyterian Committee on the revision of the creed of that church was, a few days since, unanimously adopted by the General Assembly. Three statements in the old Westminster Confession had long given extreme displeasure to the liberal wing of the church, namely the predestination article with its reprobation reverse side, the clause concerning the Pope antichrist, and the clause concerning "elect infants," with its reverse side of infant damnation. The first and the last are the "decrees," which the Westminster assembly attributed to the Almighty. They have been so considerably modified that in regard to the first we can no longer be perfectly certain that anybody has been set apart from a past eternity either to be saved or lost, that indeed faith and holiness will save anybody, and sin will damn anybody. Concerning the decree of election as it pertains to infants, the new creed states positively that all infants dying are certainly elected and none are lost. Therefore the inference of infant damnation can no longer be charged against the teaching of the Northern Presbyterian church. The Southern Presbyterians, a much more conservative body, opposed, bourbon like, to any changes whatsoever, still hold to the old confession with all its damaging inferences, and content themselves with denying those inferences, or with an attitude of indifference to criticism coming from without.

As to the Pope, whom the old confession declares to be Antichrist, etc. he is simply bowed out of the new confession, not because he has become a very different religious personage, not because he has abated his blasphemous claims to a divine vicarage, or repented of his historic character as a bloody persecutor, but because, probably, if there is any clear reason at all, it is no longer agreeable to good taste to plaster any sort of an enemy with damaging epithets. The amenities of a modern Christian civilization have taught us to oppose intrinsic error with intrinsic truth, and settle theological differences with brains instead of lungs, with arguments instead of clubs. There has been a discovery of the value of courtesy and Christian kindness in combating error, as well as in propagating truth, for example something like the courtesy of Jesus toward the Sadducees when he gently pointed out their error in regard to the resurrection; "Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures," as much as to say, An error of the head and not of the heart. He might have told them that they were simply a lot of wooden headed ignoramuses, given over to gross materialism, heavy feeders, lovers of luxury, obtuse animals, all of which was probably true, but how it would have spoiled the record. So the

Presbyterians have said to the Pope; "My dear Mr. Pope, we still believe as firmly as ever that in all probability you are antichrist, but we will not any longer make ourselves disagreeable about it. Indeed we indulge the hope that you will soon come to see how greatly you err in a good many matters, and that a merciful providence will bring you to a knowledge of the truth as it is declared in the amended Westminster Confession."

What an immense amount of mental and spiritual energy has been expended upon the making, the defending and the mending of creeds. So far as this has involved the study of the Bible, the discussion of its fundamental truths, the patient and reverent tracing of the plan of salvation, it has been energy by no means wasted. Better spend a hundred years in the honest effort to formulate a creed which accurately reflects Bible truth, or even a much smaller amount of wavering in clouds of theological mistiness, the sport of winds of doctrine blowing from yonder and there and somewhere. The trouble with the creed lies in quite a different quarter. First, in the impossibility of any creed being broad enough for racial salvation. It may fit a tribe, or a family, but there never yet has been, and never will be, a cosmopolitan creed. Occular proof of this is quite obvious and abundant. Ye dutch Calvinists of the former time are Dutch still, and ye Scotch Irish Presbyterians of the "decrees" and the Westminster Confession, are for the most part Scotch Irish still, and ye German Baptists of the very sharply drawn creed of ordinances are ninety per cent the children of your fathers. These, the most pronounced creed churches in the world, are little more than family, or clan, churches, and will never be anything else, or anything broader. On the other hand, the most notable no creed churches, the Baptist and Methodist, come nearest to being cosmopolitan. Neither of them require you to proclaim your belief in a lot of things which you don't understand, which your father and your grandfather before you didn't understand, and which your children and your grandchildren after you will never understand. That doctrine of the "decrees" for instance, think of this puny insect understanding and declaring the eternal decrees of Almighty God. Such a proposition simply arrays the common sense of the world against the church which makes it.

The same can be said of other creeds, written or unwritten, and this brings us to the second serious limitation of the creed, namely the certainty that it will accentuate particular tenets out of all proportion to the body of truth. Take a child and teach him continuously as long as he lives, and then teach his children in like manner for several generations, that a certain doctrine, no matter which, is God's corner stone, and in the minds of that man and his descendents you have made that doctrine well nigh or altogether immutable. Not only this, you have

made it bigger than all the rest of God's truth. Thus several generations of preaching of decrees have made the plan of salvation look like a bundle of decrees. Several generations of preaching of ordinances have made the plan of salvation look like a bundle of ordinances. So it comes to pass that thanks to the creeds, written and unwritten, we have a great number of lopsided Christians, lopsided churches, plans of salvation over-developed on this side, shriveled on that, clan churches, family churches, and no cosmopolitan or racial church anywhere, not a single church in the wide world as wide as the Bible and as wide as humanity.

But the tendency toward cosmopolitanism in religion is growing, evidence of which can be seen in creed revision, in the new spirit of interdenominational comity and co-operation. All sorts of anachronisms are being marked for abolishment. The foundations of the plan of salvation are being shifted from creed to character, from belief to life. In other words, belief is being more and more translated life, and creed is being more and more translated character. For after all, character is the only universal creed, as it is in deed the severest of all creeds. It is easy to believe. It is infinitely difficult to be. And when the whole world shall finally come to understand that the only Christian religion is *Christ as he was*, and the only Christian church is the *character of Jesus reappearing in men*, the vision of the New Jerusalem will descend from the skies, and all the kings of the earth will bring into it their glory and honor.

### OUTLINE OF PROPETICAL EVENTS

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We will now notice briefly, the order of events for this dispensation and the next, as stated by the Apostle James in, and approved by the first council of the church of Jesus Christ. In Acts 15: 14-17, you will find the order of events given as follows:—

1. The Calling Out of The Gentiles.
2. The Second Personal Coming of Christ.
3. The Restoration of David's Throne.
4. The Conversion of The World.

If this order of events is not correct, then Peter, Paul, Barnabas, James,—yes, the entire apostolic church on one side, and modern post-millennialists on the other, can fight it out.

1. First God did visit the Gentiles to take out of them a people for his name. (R. V. Ver. 14.)

Peter had declared before the council how in a vision a few years before, God had commanded him to preach the gospel to the Gentiles, and how it resulted in the conversion of Cornelius and the out pouring of the Holy Ghost upon the Gentiles. (Acts 10: 44, 45) Then God began and today continues the work of calling out "a people for his name." It is to be borne in mind that the word